

U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT
19 May 1986

CIA'S CASEY AT BAT

Boos pelt the press box

■ The Reagan administration's long-festered resentment over leaks to the news media and terrorists' access to television cameras flared into outright hostility twice in early May:

- William Casey, chief of the Central Intelligence Agency, said Washington may prosecute five news organizations for printing classified information.
- A State Department official accused NBC of being an accomplice to terrorism by televising an interview with the alleged mastermind of the hijacking of the *Achille Lauro* cruise ship.

Casey met with two editors of the *Washington Post* to try to stop a story about an accused spy. Casey claimed the article might contain secret communications information. He said,



Tom Brokaw screens Abbas interview

"We've already got five absolutely cold violations" by the press of a 1950 law barring disclosure of U.S. spy-communications capabilities.

Named by Casey: The *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Washington Times*, *Time* and *Newsweek*. The cases are believed to have involved U.S. interception of Libyan messages about the Berlin bombing that led to the American bombing raid on Libya.

"The President himself first revealed the nature of these intercepted messages," said *Post* Managing Editor Leonard Downie. A Justice Department official said: "No one here is the least bit enthusiastic" about prosecuting.

NBC defended its interview with accused terrorist leader Mohammed Abu Abbas—who threatened more attacks against Americans—as legitimate news.

But Robert Oakley, head of the State Department's counterterrorism unit, declared: "When a media outlet makes deals with a terrorist not to divulge his whereabouts, [it] is saying, in effect, 'We've become his accomplices in order to give him publicity.'"